

National Bereavement Alliance

Parental Bereavement (Leave and Pay) Bill 2017-2019

Briefing for Second Reading 20 October 2017

Introduction

1. This briefing has been prepared by the National Bereavement Alliance, following a members' meeting on 3 October 2017.
2. The Alliance broadly welcomes the Bill and recognises the significant contribution made by Kevin Hollinrake MP, Will Quince MP and campaigners including Lucy Herd.

About the National Bereavement Alliance

3. The National Bereavement Alliance brings together over 35 national, regional and local organisations supporting bereaved people and those caring for them.
4. Our vision is that all people have awareness of and access to support and services throughout their bereavement experience. All members of the Alliance contribute to this vision through their own aims and objectives, in various ways and at various times. While we are highly diverse in the primary focus of our work, we share a common interest in support for bereaved people. Recognising one another's contribution to our vision, Alliance members collaborate strategically to provide a collective voice representing the needs of bereaved people and those supporting them.
5. In our 2014 report [Life After Death](#), we campaigned for better bereavement support at work. We supported ACAS in their development of guidance for employers.

Proposed amendment

6. We welcome the Bill's recognition of the diverse circumstances in which bereaved parents may find themselves, and that the Bill does not require parents to take their leave immediately following the death but gives them a window in which it can be taken.
7. However, we would prefer the window of opportunity to be extended from 8 weeks to 52 weeks. This would give parents greater choice, being able to take the leave when they need it most. This might be around a particular date (eg the child's birthday, the run-up to the anniversary of the death) or simply at a time when they are struggling more.
8. Increasing the window would have implications for employers, given their need to plan to cover employees' absence. However, many child deaths are unexpected, and so

whatever the length of the window, many parental bereavement absences will be arranged at very short notice. We believe that the benefits to bereaved parents of extending the window outweigh the implications for employers.

9. The actual window will be set out in Regulations, but the Bill sets out the provisions that those regulations must contain. **We suggest the following amendment to the Bill**

Page 2, Line 26 replace '56 days' with '52 weeks'

Other comments on the Bill

10. We are very aware of the time pressures on this Bill, and for this reason we have limited our suggested amendments. However, we would be grateful if MPs would consider raising some of our other points below during the Second Reading debate.
11. Families where the death is subject to inquest or other proceedings or investigations may need a longer window in which to take their leave. **Please ask the Minister what provision is being made for families in these circumstances**
12. The special educational needs and disability (SEND) system in England recognises the needs of young people between the ages of 18 and 25 in the Children and Families Act 2014. **Please ask the Minister if she would consider extending the provision of this bill to support parents bereaved of an 18-25 year old child who had a life-limiting condition.**
13. Many people suffer greatly at the death of another family member such as a partner, parent or sibling, and their bereavement necessitates them taking time off work. The costs of this to society are hidden as many people will be signed off with stress, depression or anxiety rather than bereavement. We would like to see a consultation opened on the wider circumstances in which employees should be entitled to leave and pay following a close family bereavement. **Please ask the Minister if she would consider reviewing the impact of the Bill on employees and employers after a year, and consult on the wider circumstances of bereavement in which statutory provision of leave and pay would be appropriate.**
14. Our members raised concerns for self-employed people, those on zero hours contracts and those who had been employed for less than 26 weeks (the qualifying period for pay in the Bill). **Please ask the Minister what provision she has considered for these groups.**

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